

With our aging veteran population and so many new veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, I am committed to providing veterans with the health care and benefits we promised them. Since I became a member of Congress, I have worked to ensure that all our veterans are given the benefits and care they deserve. Most recently, I supported the fiscal year 2010 Budget Resolution Conference report which honors our veterans by providing an 11.7 percent increase for veterans' health care and would also allow Congress to provide funding for VA medical care a year in advance. This change would ensure that VA is properly funded so that all our veterans are receiving the care they need and deserve. This budget also expands health care eligibility by allowing modest-income veterans to enroll in VA health care, as well as provides needed funding for the research and treatment of mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Prior to the Memorial Day, the House passed several bills to show our commitment to those that have bravely served our country. H.R. 1170 would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a grant program to encourage the development of new assistive technologies for specially adapted housing for disabled veterans. We are also working to guarantee employment rights for veterans with the passage of H.R. 1089, which would provide for the enforcement of employment and reemployment rights of veterans and members of the Armed Forces employed by Federal executive agencies. Furthermore, H.R. 1088 supports our disabled veterans by ensuring that individuals are properly trained to handle their needs. This bill would require disabled veterans' outreach program specialist or a local veterans' employment representative to complete the training program provided by the National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute within one year of being hired.

During the 110th Congress, I supported the Fiscal Year 2009 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, which supported our veterans by allowing hospitals to hire more doctors and nurses to decrease wait times for appointments. I was proud to support a portion of the Supplemental Appropriations for fiscal year 2008, which expanded education benefits veterans receive under the GI bill. This benefit has not kept up with the rising costs of a college education and this legislation restores the promise of a full, four-year college education. Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, or their spouses and dependents, can now be a part of our American economic recovery, just as veterans were after World War II.

I will continue to do everything I can in Congress to ensure that veterans in the 13th District of New Jersey have access to the important care and services they were promised. Please know that my office is always open should you have any needs or concerns.